

CONGENITAL HYPOTHYROIDISM

What is Congenital Hypothyroidism?

Congenital hypothyroidism is caused when the body does not make thyroxine. Thyroxine is a hormone made by the thyroid gland. Thyroxine is necessary for the development of the brain in infants. If babies are not treated with medication their brain will not develop and they will have mental retardation.

Newborns with congenital hypothyroidism often appear completely normal up to three months of age. Your baby had a newborn screening test to check for congenital hypothyroidism. The screening test allows hypothyroidism to be discovered before symptoms appear. When congenital hypothyroid is detected early and treated with a hormone replacement medication, babies with congenital hypothyroidism grow and have normal intelligence.

Can I see it?

Most of the time you cannot tell an infant has a problem. Infants with congenital hypothyroidism often look healthy. Some infants with congenital hypothyroidism may have one or more of these signs: a large fontanelle, or soft spot, a large tongue or a hoarse cry. These infants may feel cold and have a hard time staying warm, be very sleepy and hard to wake up. They may have problems with jaundice, or being yellow. They may not eat well or have a hard time sucking. Their tummy's may be bloated, have constipation or vomit frequently.

What Test was done?

The Newborn Screening test measures the hormones called T4 and TSH in a babies blood. Sometimes, the levels will be high. If they are too high, it is a very good indication that the infant has congenital hypothyroidism. Newborn screening can detect levels that are outside normal ranges and the next step is to do more testing. Your infant will have a blood test for a serum T4 and serum TSH. These tests are more accurate and helps your doctor know if your baby has congenital hypothyroidism.

How often does this happen?

Congenital hypothyroidism occurs in 1:3,000 births. This means that a lot of people have congenital hypothyroidism. No one knows why most cases of congenital hypothyroidism occur. Some are inherited. Mothers who have hypothyroidism may pass TSH receptor blocking antibodies through the placenta, causing temporary hypothyroidism in the infant. Almost all cases of congenital hypothyroidism are permanent.

The good news:

Congenital Levothyroxine is a synthetic or man made medication that works just like the hormone in our bodies. Hypothyroidism is easily treated with a daily medication called des. Your doctor will check your baby's blood level to make sure the medication is working. Because babies are growing, frequent monitoring of blood levels and changes in medication are necessary.

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